

# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

## *Minutes*

July 13, 2016

Commission Members Absent:

Commission Members Present:

Reverend Turner  
Opel T. Jones, I  
Ivette Lopez  
Bianca Chang  
Peter Hwang  
Joan Hash  
Shiraz Ahmed  
Ilene Kessler  
Frank Eastham  
Ivan Betancourt  
Eli Sauerwalt

Staff:

Dr. Barbara J. Sands, HRC Executive Secretary  
Stephanie Chapple, HRC Recording Secretary  
Barry Sanders, HRC Legal Counsel

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. **PUBLIC FORUM – Guests** – (1) Laura DePalma-Staff Attorney at FreeState Justice; (2) Saida Agostini – Director of Community Engagement & Youth Policies for FreeState Justice; (3) Catherine Hyde – former HRC member and current member of PFLAG; (4) Fern Hamel – Howard County resident

- FreeState Legal serves Marylanders of the LGBT community & offers legal services i.e. name changes, update identity documents, provides legal services for 2<sup>nd</sup> parent adoption to same sex couples & parents, etc. FreeState Legal also provides information to schools, files claims w/the Md Commission on Civil Rights for clients, etc.
- PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays) – works with families, faith-based groups, Howard County citizens, and schools to offer support, sponsor programs, host/plan community events, promote advocacy, and provides resources to the LGBTQ community.

3. **HRC CASES UPDATE – LEGAL COUNSEL –**

- HRC denied appeals for HRC Case No.'s 16-05-004, 16-05-005 & 16-06-006

4. **APPROVE MINUTES**

June minutes were approved.

5. **COMMITTEES/ REPORTS**

- Finance & Fair Lending with Housing – *Ilene & Ivette* - No report
- Legislation – *Ivette* – Ivette mentioned legislation re. HRC Student position. Per Opel, Reverend Turner will discuss during his Chair's report upon arrival.
- Education, Public Safety and Student Life Committee – *Frank, Reverend Turner, Opel, Ivette* - Per Frank, more than 300+ educators from the HCPSS attended a Cultural Proficiency Conference in June. Focus of conference was **Student Voice**. Recommendations from **HCPSS Committee for Diversity and Inclusion** will be sent to Board of Education on 8/19. Opel and Eli served on behalf of the HRC.  
For discussion, Opel opened conversation regarding a posting on Social Media regarding a situation in the cafeteria at 1 of the high schools...students were allowed to post encouraging comments about various topics. During a lunch period, 1 student posted a picture of a political candidate. Opel and Ivan shared their opinions on this topic. Shiraz suggested possibly teaming up with a few of the school's guidance offices to share with students the duties & roles of this Commission, as well as, how the Commission can support student initiatives as it relates to inclusion and acceptance, etc. Frank informed Commission members that HCPSS has guideline in place to allow for an equal and fair environment as it relates to political opinions.
- HRC Awards Committee – *Bianca & Opel* – Bianca and Opel will look at 2017 calendar to determine month/date for awards program. Targeted month for awards program is April. Bianca and Opel will email 2 tentative dates to Stephanie. Once dates are received, Stephanie will look at possible locations for awards program, specifically the Historic Oakland Ballroom which received numerous compliments this year.

- Human Trafficking Committee – *Ivan* – Ivan attended the MD State Fireman’s Association in Ocean City, MD. Some of the topics included identifying Human Trafficking victims, EMS training, and resources.
- LGBTQ Committee - *Vacant* – Opel agreed to Chair this committee.
- Aging, Disability and Health Care Committee – *Bianca* – Healthy Howard Healthcare Access is now being taken over by the Howard County Bureau of Health Promotions. The staff has moved to a new location within the Howard County General Hospital. Several high schools will continue to serve meals to children in need during the summer months.

6. STUDENT REPORT – Commissioners thanked Eli for his service to the Commission. Ivette circulated a draft resource brochure on definitions of Gender Identities, a list of resources, etc. to propose to the commission. Ivette will work with Eli to complete the project. Per Ivette, please review the 1<sup>st</sup> draft and email your comments, etc. directly to her. Eli sought guidance from FreeState Justice and PFLAG on information highlighted in brochure. Dr. Sands confirmed with both Ivette and Eli details that needed to be complete before final draft is submitted. Eli will work with Ivette to complete brochure.

\*\*\*Prior to Staff Report/Updates, Ivan announced his resignation. Dr. Sands thanked Ivan for his service to the Commission and county.

#### 7. STAFF REPORT/UPDATES –

Dr. Sands submitted monthly filing reports/overview of OHR cases. New Commissioners attended training on 7/8 offered by OHR; M. Campbell conducted the training.

Office of Law will also offer training to Commissioners in reviewing cases, etc. This training lasts approximately 40-50 minutes. Training should be offered on a Saturday or an evening where everyone is able to attend. Second training conducted by Office of Law will consist of “2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment/Freedom of Speech,” etc. Additionally, Dr. Sands met with the Office of Law regarding a quorum. Although matters of business cannot be voted on during the absence of a quorum, meeting can still be recorded, information can be shared, etc. At the end of the meeting, if all members present are in agreement, someone can make a motion to adopt the minutes and make that a part of the formal meeting. Ivette requests that representatives from the Office of Law discuss this with all Commissioners. Frank mentioned that, in the past, although a quorum was not present, those members in attendance would vote to have/not have the meeting. Per Dr. Sands, it is important for a member to state at the beginning of the meeting “this meeting comes to order, however we do not have a quorum.” At the conclusion of the meeting, 1 member must say “the commission adopts what has been said and done on (date).”

Since Holland Dinner is scheduled on the same night as the October 2016 meeting, Commissioners voted to move the October meeting to either 10/19 or 10/27 based on availability of room scheduling. Stephanie will confirm date once room is reserved. Frank suggested having the initial training (above) during the October meeting, and to reserve the training time slot for 7:30 – 9:30p.m. Frank made the motion, it was seconded, all approved. Six tickets will be purchased for the Holland Dinner for the following Commissioners: Shiraz, Ilene, Joan, Opel, Frank, Reverend Turner.

#### 8. CHAIR’S REPORT –

(1) Student Commissioner – Joan and Reverend Turner narrowed field to 4 candidates. Both are prepared to propose 2 processes, so that, at the end of the month, the HRC will have a student’s name to be forwarded to the County Executive. Joan, Ivette, Frank & Bianca will interview and forward their (student) recommendation before July 29<sup>th</sup> to Dr. Sands electronically, to in turn, have forwarded to the County Executive’s office for consideration. Per Reverend Turner, in reviewing the county’s website, Commissioners noticed that a Bill was already introduced to the County Council on July 8<sup>th</sup> for a student candidate for the HRC student position, with the public hearing on July 18<sup>th</sup>. Commissioners, along with Dr. Sands, indicated they were unaware that a student nominee’s name was being forwarded for consideration. Dr. Sands will meet with David Lee tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. for more information. An email follow-up from that meeting will be sent from Dr. Sands to all members by noon tomorrow. Reverend Turner will make the request to invite the County Executive, or one of his staff, to attend an upcoming meeting to share the process for nominating Commissioners.

(2) HRC Budget – the standard categories will remain the same which include: conferences, awards, community outreach, and education. The budget sub-committee (Rev. Turner, Ivette, Opel and Shiraz) will review the budget, discuss plans for each category, and submit to Dr. Sands.

(3) Community and Faith-Based Services – there were 2 community prayer services in response to the recent tragic shootings with 2 African American men; 1 in Louisiana, the other in Minnesota, and the tragic shootings of the officers in Dallas. Police Chief Gardner, Lonnie Robbins, members of the County Council, and Todd Givens from OHR, attended the services.

**OHR ADMINISTRATOR & HRC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ROLE at HRC MEETINGS** – This agenda item was posted in response to questions & conversations from the June meeting re. the Executive Secretary's role at the meetings. Dr. Sands confirmed her role as it is stated in the Howard County Code Sec. 12.202. IV. Dr. Sands also confirmed that her role as Executive Secretary, and OHR's role, is to offer support to the Commission and supply administrative assistance. Ivette shared concerns regarding order of agenda. Joan gave her perspective as a new Commissioner, and indicated that "as long as the HRC is meeting its mission, as long as we are serving the citizens of Howard County, the focus should not be on the order of agenda. The order of agenda is not set in stone." Dr. Sands also clarified that her request to present the Staff Report/Updates before the Legal Counsel segment of the meeting, is to avoid staying for the uncertain length of time during the duration of the closed session when Commissioners discuss cases with HRC Legal Counsel. Shiraz suggested meeting with the budget sub-committee to determine if there are any specific needs the Commission would like assistance from the Executive Secretary, to specify those items, which Dr. Sands and Reverend Turner will discuss at the monthly Tuesday meeting prior to the HRC meeting.

9. **NEW BUSINESS** – As an agenda item for the HRC budget sub-committee, Shiraz would like to look at possible dates for an HRC Retreat, team-building activities, etc. for the fall. More details will be shared at the September meeting.

10. **ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES** – N/A

11. **ADJOURNMENT** – Meeting adjourned at 10:04 p.m.